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February 2, 2011

Honorable Lisa P. Jackson
Administrator
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Jackson:

I am writing to applaud you and offer my full support for your efforts to set new federal drinking water standards for the rocket fuel component, perchlorate, which has been linked to thyroid problems and other developmental impediments.

Your efforts to regulate perchlorate, as well as other cancer-causing volatile organic compounds, or VOCs, are consistent with my work on the Energy & Commerce Committee during the 111th Congress to protect the public health and ensure safe drinking water for all Americans. As you may know, my office worked with your agency to amend the Safe Drinking Water Act by inserting reporting and inspection provisions in the Assistance, Quality, and Affordability Act (AQUA) of 2010. Those provisions, if enacted, would have given the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) the information and tools it needed to ensure compliance of drinking water standards and allow the agency to address violations in a timely manner.

In 1986, in the First Congressional District of Illinois, which I represent, the state EPA was alerted that the Village of Crestwood officials were piping in contaminated drinking water to its citizens. Despite warnings from the state agency to end this illegal practice, incredibly, it took another 20 years before the state went back out to inspect the water supply and found that contaminated water was still being used.

Although the AQUA Act was stalled in the Senate after passing the House last year, the language I introduced would have required states to take affirmative steps to confirm that water systems were in compliance with EPA orders to address noncompliance. Additionally, electronic reporting directly to EPA would have given the agency the timely information it needs to monitor the enforcement efforts of primacy states and to inform its own enforcement and compliance assistance efforts.

Though my efforts did not come into fruition last Congress, I applaud you for your most recent steps to help ensure quality drinking water for all Americans. Successful implementation of these measures will go a long way in preventing another Crestwood scandal.

Thank you for your efforts and I look forward to working with you to regulate perchlorate in drinking water standards.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bobby L. Rush".

Bobby L. Rush
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Energy and Power